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Thomas S. Mach

Cedarville University, macht@cedarville.edu

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Gentleman George Hunt Pendleton: Party Politics and Ideological Identity in Nineteenth-Century America

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The Early Years

The mighty Ohio River brought much more than life-giving water to the burgeoning city of Cincinnati in 1825. Indeed, the river provided the very means for maintaining the Queen City's most important economic activity, commercial trade. But beyond the farm produce that was shipped south and the finished goods brought in from the East, Ohio's fastest growing city relied on the river to transport to the city immigrants who would comprise a significant portion of the city's population. As Cincinnati gained economic prominence, her citizenry began to make a political impact not only on the state of Ohio but also on the nation.¹ The Pendletons, one of the prominent families in Cincinnati, came west down the Ohio in 1818. Already having made a significant impact on the national political scene, the Pendleton family introduced its latest addition on July 19, 1825, George Hunt Pendleton, who would continue to place the family's mark on the development of the Republic. Although Pendleton's father was a Whig, Pendleton chose to become a Democrat in the early 1850s when he began his political career. As a young man, this pivotal decision set the stage for his role in developing the midwestern Democratic political ideology in the middle of the nineteenth century. Pendleton's choice of party affiliation was a difficult one influenced by a number of factors, some of which are already recognized as part of the historiographical discussion of partisanship in this era and some of which are not. An examination of his decision and his early political career provides a window for viewing the changing political arena in Cincinnati and Ohio, the variety of factors involved in making such choices, and the continuity of political ideology in the face of a dynamic party system.

The fourth of seven children, George Pendleton entered the world as a member of a founding family not only of Cincinnati but also of the United States. The Pendletons emigrated from Norwich, England, in 1674 to New Kent

County, Virginia. Philip Pendleton was its first representative in the New World and eventually brought the family to high economic and social status. One of his grandsons, Edmund Pendleton, served in the Virginia House of Burgesses and the Continental Congresses of 1774 and 1775. George's grandfather, and the nephew of Edmund, Nathaniel Pendleton, was an aide-de-camp to Gen. Nathaniel Greene during the American War for Independence. Following the war, Nathaniel Pendleton served as delegate to the Constitutional Convention in 1787. President George Washington named him judge of the U.S. District Court for the state of Georgia where, in 1793, Nathaniel Greene Pendleton was born. An ardent Federalist, the elder Nathaniel was a close friend and confidant of Alexander Hamilton, serving as Hamilton's second in his fateful duel with Aaron Burr. Nathaniel Pendleton eventually moved his family to Dutchess County, New York, where he rubbed elbows with some of the most respected men in the young republic. He practiced law there until his death in 1821.²

Young Nathaniel Greene Pendleton left his family in New York and migrated west to the Queen City. Within two years, he met and married Jane Frances Hunt, daughter of Jesse Hunt, one of Cincinnati's earliest settlers. Together with William Henry Harrison, Arthur St. Clair, Jacob Burnett, and Nicholas Longworth, Hunt had helped to create the city. Born in Savannah, Georgia, Nathaniel Greene Pendleton graduated from Columbia College in New York and served in the War of 1812. He entered local politics and won a seat in the Ohio Senate, where he served for four years. In 1841, voters sent him as a Whig to the U.S. House of Representatives for one term. He rejected renomination and practiced law in Cincinnati until his death in 1861.³ Pendleton's economic and political success provided his seven children a respected family name and all the benefits that wealth could provide. Yet those same blessings brought with them high expectations and responsibility.

Reflecting their status, the Pendletons sought the best secondary education possible for their son, George Hunt. They considered the state's common school system, which the state legislature had organized in 1828, inadequate. Instead they selected Woodward High School, a small college preparatory institution, founded by William Woodward and his wife. This school did not meet the goals of the Pendletons, however, and in 1835 they sent young Pendleton to a more rigorous school operated by Ormsby Macknight Mitchel, a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy.⁴

Mitchel had left West Point to teach mathematics, natural philosophy, geography, and astronomy in Cincinnati. He was best known for his love of astronomy. Mitchel traveled extensively throughout the nation raising \$40,000 in subscriptions to construct the Cincinnati observatory in 1845. When it was built, the telescope was the largest in the United States and second largest in the

world. When Cincinnati College was organized, both Mitchel and Pendleton entered but in different capacities. Mitchel became a professor of mathematics, while Pendleton began studying foreign languages and mathematics. The college, headed by President William H. McGuffey, later famous for his primary readers, was nonsectarian and had a curriculum heavy in classical studies, medicine, and later, law. Pendleton found that even this institution did not suit his needs, and he left in 1841 to continue his studies under private tutelage.⁵

For the next three years Pendleton studied at home, continuing to improve his mastery of French and German as well as classical studies. While the city in the 1830s and 1840s was populated by hardworking families who had little time or money for either leisure or the extravagance of a private education, the Pendleton family was an exception, and private tutors were available to wealthy families in Cincinnati. Nathaniel Greene Pendleton provided his children benefits that were not accessible to most families in the nineteenth century, and his son George took full advantage of them. He and his brother Elliot Hunt would spend two years traveling throughout Europe as part of their education.

In 1844, five years after the death of his mother, George Hunt Pendleton bid his family farewell and ventured off to see the world. Initially visiting Paris, he then traveled south to winter in Italy. During the following spring, he journeyed north through the German states, spending some time in Berlin, and continuing on to Great Britain. In the 1840s, Europe had yet to develop an extensive railroad system, so much of Pendleton's traveling was slow and difficult. He persevered, however, and made a learning experience of his journey. He spent a considerable amount of time in the galleries of the British Parliament in London, absorbing the rules of order and the interworkings of government. The knowledge gained there provided him with an expertise that he would use time and again as a member of the loyal opposition during the Civil War. After his stay in the island nation, he returned to Heidelberg where he enrolled in the university.⁶

Pendleton matriculated on May 13, 1845, at the age of nineteen. His mastery of the German language allowed him to study the philosophy of law for two semesters.⁷ After a summer and winter of formal study, he resumed his experiential learning through travel, departing for Greece. There he surveyed the ruins of classical civilization. Still yearning for more, he journeyed east to the Holy Land, contemplating sacred places. Continuing his circumvention of the Mediterranean Sea, he traveled to Egypt and crossed the desert by camel to view the remains of that ancient society. He concluded his European trip by traveling through France, Great Britain, and Ireland before returning to the United States in the summer of 1846. Having seen more of the world than the vast majority of his countrymen, and having visited many of the national capitals en route, Pendleton stood above his peers in his knowledge of world affairs.⁸

Upon his arrival home in Cincinnati, he met, proposed to, and married Mary Alicia Lloyd Nevins Key, generally known as Alice Key. Little is known of their courtship, but recognizing the Southern heritage and high standing of both families, the parents probably played a role in bringing them together. Nonetheless, by all accounts the young couple was truly in love. Alice was the daughter of Francis Scott Key, author of "The Star-Spangled Banner," and the niece of Roger B. Taney, chief justice of the United States Supreme Court. They were married in Baltimore in 1846 but took up residence in Cincinnati. The newlyweds lived with Nathaniel Greene Pendleton while they looked for a home in the Queen City. Over the next decade they started their own family. By the time Alice's brother, Philip Barton Key, district attorney for the District of Columbia, was murdered by New York congressman Dan E. Sickles, the Pendletons already had two children of their own. The first was a son, Francis Key, and the other a daughter, Mary Lloyd. After the funeral, they took in Philip's son and daughter to rear as their own.⁹

Pendleton now focused his studies on the reading of law in the office of Stephen Fales, the former partner of Nathaniel Greene Pendleton. Pendleton's genteel manner and quick mind allowed him to stand out in a crowd where his physical appearance might not. A newspaper report described him as "a fine-looking man, with dark hair, inclined to curl; dark expressive eyes, a handsome face, well rounded head generally, and set upon a well-formed trunk."¹⁰ He stood about five feet nine inches tall and weighed in the neighborhood of 170 pounds. Admitted to the Ohio Bar in 1847, young Pendleton soon formed a business partnership with a boyhood schoolmate, George Ellis Pugh.¹¹ Through much of this partnership, Pugh was serving in the army during the Mexican War with the 4th Ohio Volunteer Infantry. He returned to Cincinnati only to be promptly elected to the state legislature. The partnership of Pugh and Pendleton lasted only five years; Pugh was elected attorney general of the state of Ohio in 1852, and the firm dissolved. The few extant records reveal little of their day-to-day activities.¹² Pendleton then apparently focused some of his attention on rental and mortgage claims, but his law career slowed as he launched his political career in 1854.¹³

Although Edward D. Mansfield, journalist, editor, historian of Cincinnati, and a contemporary of Pendleton, believed that men obtained their political affiliation from their fathers, Pendleton defied expectation and broke from his father's Whiggish background to become a Democrat. An investigation of this break provides an opportunity for examining party identification in Ohio during the 1840s and 1850s. It also illustrates the variety of influences that went into creating the western Democratic political ideology that Pendleton represented and, in many ways, helped form in this period. In the end, this is a story

that highlights the importance of family ties over family status, party realities over party nostalgia, and political ideology over political rhetoric in the process of choosing a partisan affiliation.¹⁴

The factors in George Pendleton's decision to become a Democrat vary and provide some insight into the political composition of parties in this era. Historians have grappled for decades with the issues that induced Americans of the early nineteenth century to form and reform their political alignments. Some voters were influenced by economic determinants in choosing their party affiliation. Political rhetoric of the era frequently equated the Whig Party with business, commercial, and property interests, while the Democratic Party was portrayed as representing the poorer elements of society or those not directly benefiting from the changing economy.¹⁵ With the advent of the Market Revolution, the disparity between the economic groups seemed to solidify.¹⁶ Those benefiting from the new commercial systems developing in the country tended to be Whigs, whereas those who were not tended to be Democrats. While Pendleton's Cincinnati was a commercial city and should have been strongly Whig, it was an exception to the rule, likely because the Queen City residents had suffered disproportionately during the Panic of 1819 and blamed the Second Bank of the United States for it. Economic factors, or at least the perception of those factors, were causative agents in party affiliation. Nonetheless, power vacillated back and forth between the parties.¹⁷

Other factors played a role as well. That economic issues were not the sole determinants is evidenced in the makeup of the Democrats and the Whigs. Both parties had members from all economic strata. Ethno-cultural and religious differences played a role in political preference, such as national origin, region and era of birth, and religious inclination. Immigrants from the British Isles tended to vote for Whigs; those from the rest of Europe tended to vote for Democrats. Native-born citizens from New York tended to be Whig, while those from Virginia held to Democratic ideals. With reference to religious beliefs, Evangelicals, comprised of Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists, who wanted to maintain the moral fiber of society and who sought the eradication of evils such as alcohol, prostitution, and slavery, tended to vote Whig. Anti-Evangelicals, who were mainly Catholics, Episcopalians, Campbellites, Unitarians, Universalists, free-thinkers, deists, or atheists, and who focused on the individual rights of men (and thus eschewed increased state power for the purpose of maintaining a set of morals), were generally Democrats.¹⁸

Although ethno-cultural influences were important for many, ideological emphases cannot be ignored.¹⁹ For example, the "two great principles of Whig social thought, order and philanthropy" tended to differentiate the two parties.²⁰ This focus was a key distinction from the Democratic Party, which could not accept the



“Gentleman George” Hunt Pendleton, 1825–1889. (*History of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, Ohio; Their Past and Present, Including . . . Biographies and Portraits of Pioneers and Representative Citizens, etc.* Cincinnati: S. B. Nelson, 1894)

notion of government controlling the individual. As an example, Abraham Lincoln had been a Whig because he believed Whiggery promoted a more civilized lifestyle. Whigs accepted modernization with restraint, and according to their values, economic advance was to be embraced and encouraged with governmental support, but they rejected “socioeconomic equality, toleration of diversity, and acceptance of political conflict.”²¹ The Whig “ideological core [was] built around beliefs in social order, Unionism, activist domestic governance, a non-aggressive

foreign policy, and opposition to executive tyranny."²² Democrats, conversely, pursued greater economic equality, embraced diversity and political partisanship, and preferred state sovereignty, rather than federal involvement, over most domestic issues. The prevalence of these themes in political speeches and editorials of the era suggest that they resonated with voters.

With the multitude of variables that determined political partisanship, ascertaining the reasons for Pendleton's party choice proves complex. The Pendleton family was part of the wealthy elite of Cincinnati, and George Pendleton had the benefits of this esteemed family name in addition to an inherited family fortune. He traveled extensively and obtained an excellent education. As testimony to the family's affluence, the censuses of 1850, 1860, and 1870 enumerate at least one and generally two domestic servants in the employ of Alice Key and George Pendleton. His holdings in 1860 amounted to \$75,000 in real estate and \$3,000 in personal property. By the next census, he had accrued through inheritance and accumulation real estate worth \$250,000 and personal property totaling \$25,000. If economic considerations were decisive for the Pendletons, Nathaniel Greene would have been a Whig, and indeed he was. On that basis, his son should have followed his father's footsteps into the Whig fold, yet George became a Democrat.²³

For the Pendletons, economic factors were not primary in determining partisanship. In evaluating ethno-cultural factors, George Pendleton is again an enigma. The Pendletons were native-born citizens who migrated from the New York region, suggesting that Nathaniel Greene and his sons would probably become Whigs. Again, only the elder Pendleton fits the model. It is clear, however, that the family's Southern heritage influenced the elder Pendleton's political ideology and eventually George Pendleton as well. The family was Episcopalian, which placed it within the anti-Evangelical group of partisans who tended to vote Democratic. This partially explains the younger Pendleton's decision to be a Democrat, but does little to reveal his father's motives for remaining a Whig. Either George Pendleton is an exception to the rule or he is an example of the struggle many Whigs faced as their party began to disintegrate.²⁴

Introducing the ideological factors in antebellum partisanship as well as the question of party viability adds to an understanding of Pendleton's choice but does not address all potential variables. The Ohio Whig Party was losing power in 1850. Internal state turmoil and conflicts due to national issues, such as the Compromise of 1850, may have signaled to Pendleton that the Whig Party was in decline.²⁵ Yet Pendleton was no neophyte and undoubtedly understood the ebb and flow of political power. The difficulties of the party did not cause his father to jump ship. Indeed, even if George Pendleton did sense the Whig demise, there were other options available to him than aligning with the op-

position. Whig ideological distinctiveness may shed more light on Pendleton's decision. The Whigs' focus on order and control undoubtedly concerned Pendleton, for during his long career he maintained a strong adherence to the concept of private conscience, believing that the government should not regulate private behavior. In addition, his Southern heritage lent itself to a states' rights concept of governance, including the idea that states should decide internal matters such as slavery. Perhaps the Ohio Whig support for abolitionist Benjamin Wade as senator solidified his resolve to be a Democrat. Yet even here, the partisan indicators are not clear. A nuanced analysis recognizes that neither of the major parties could easily align, even on as potent an issue as slavery. Perhaps this discourse shows how a multitude of factors played some role in influencing Pendleton's choice of party affiliation.

In evaluating the causes of Pendleton's decision to become a Democrat, it is important to understand his family's partisan background. Nathaniel Pendleton, George's grandfather, had been a close friend of Alexander Hamilton and a fellow Federalist. Nathaniel Greene, his son, represented the Whig Party in both the Ohio Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives. He was a confidant of William Henry Harrison and campaigned hard in Ohio for his friend during the presidential election of 1840. Harrison's home was in Hamilton County, and so close was the association between Harrison and Nathaniel Greene that Ohio Whigs assumed that the new president would name him to a cabinet post. Though Harrison served less than a month, he had selected his cabinet even before his inauguration, which did not include Nathaniel. His successor, John Tyler, initially made no changes in the executive department, but when he did he also passed over Nathaniel for a post. When both men failed to recognize the contributions of Nathaniel Greene Pendleton, the Ohio Whig Party believed it had been done a disservice. Pendleton did not become embittered or leave the party, and other politicians recognized him as one of the leading Whigs in the state throughout his life.²⁶

Beyond the damage done by Harrison's seeming indifference, the Ohio Whig organization had many internal conflicts, similar to those of the national party. The Whigs were comprised of four major factions. In the North, "Cotton Whigs," who were reliant on the cotton trade, advocated the expansion of slavery. In contrast, Northern "Conscience Whigs" sought to prevent the spread of the "evil" institution of slavery. They believed that slavery was constitutionally protected in the South but did not think it should be allowed to expand into the western territories. In the South, the Cotton Whigs, generally slave owners, opposed the extension of slavery because of the principle of supply and demand. Slave prices would go up, they thought, and cotton prices would go down if the institution spread to the West. The "Union" or "National

Whigs" feared the slavery issue altogether and wanted the party to avoid the question. Because of the variety of views, the very existence of the national Whig organization depended on the success of the Unionists in squashing the issue. The Whig principles that tied these factions together were order and philanthropy.²⁷ Practical application of these ideals resulted in numerous Whig issues outside of slavery including neomercantilism, white supremacy, political piety, temperance, and xenophobia.²⁸ The Whigs had to maintain a delicate balance to prevent factionalization of the many disparate groups within its organization, even to the point of remaining silent on major issues such as the extension of slavery.²⁹

This fragile coalition had little internal strength to weather the storms of the 1840s and 1850s. After Harrison's death, Tyler, a slave owner, assumed the presidency with little regard for party unity. When Henry Clay, the Whig leader in Congress, proposed his "American System," President Tyler vetoed the national bank portion of the package and created considerable division within the party. Further factionalization of the party continued throughout the decade and accelerated when the territories gained from the Mexican-American War sought statehood. Now the Whigs could not avoid the issue of slavery expansion. They had hoped that the issue had been settled by the Missouri Compromise, but after struggling through the Compromise of 1850, they felt far less secure. The Kansas-Nebraska Bill of 1854 repealed the 36° 30' line of the Missouri Compromise that separated free and slave territories, jeopardizing the future of the Whigs. As with many compromises, groups on both sides were left disgruntled. Slavery extension was a major issue that brought about the disintegration of the national Whig organization, but there were other important issues that hastened the end. Most of them are revealed more clearly through an examination of state and local elections.³⁰

There was among some Whigs in this period a growing sense that the major parties were not directly confronting the issues of greatest political importance to the mass of the electorate. Often those issues were more local in nature or expression and thus made them more difficult for the national organization to address. This frustration resulted in what some historians have referred to as "antipartyism." Driven by the sense that parties were more interested in "office-chasing and wire-pulling" than the ultimate success of the Republic, these Whigs began to seek redress in what became known as Know Nothing fraternal organizations, completely outside the two-party political system.³¹ These disaffected citizens focused their attention on ethno-cultural issues such as "temperance, nativism, anti-Catholicism."³² They pursued legislation to protect the use of the Protestant Bible in schools, extend the naturalization process, bring labor and political reform, and support Sunday and prohibition laws such as the Maine Law of 1851.

The seeming indifference to these concerns at the national organization level and the growing economic prosperity of the late 1840s and early 1850s made the Whig party appear unnecessary in their eyes. When combined with the centrifugal force of the antiextension issue, the Whig party appeared doomed. By the mid-1850s, the Know Nothings came into their own as a separate party while the Whigs began to disintegrate.³³

In early 1841, Ohio Whigs had cause for optimism when President Harrison appointed Ohioan Thomas Ewing as secretary of the treasury, but Harrison's untimely death brought doubt and disillusionment to Buckeye Whigs. They seriously wondered if the party would consider the interests of the West, especially after a Southerner, John Tyler, assumed the executive office. The conflicts within the party attributable to Tyler's opposition to Henry Clay's American System, and the resulting decline of the organization, accelerated during the early 1840s even as George Pendleton was determining his political loyalties. If he looked realistically at Ohio politics without concern for his political heritage, he might have been able to predict the eventual doom of the Whigs. He doubtless considered it unwise for a young, ambitious attorney to step aboard the sinking vessel that was the Whig Party.³⁴

In weighing the political strength of the Whigs versus the Democrats, Pendleton also looked realistically at his potential constituency. In examining the composition of the Cincinnati electorate, Pendleton could not help but notice the high percentage of foreign-born Cincinnatians who tended to vote Democratic. Hamilton County had traditionally voted Democratic in the 1830s. As early as 1825, there were 2,411 names on the register of gainfully employed Cincinnatians, with 533 immigrants, including 210 English, 166 Irish, 51 Germans, 40 Scots, and a variety of other nationalities. The numbers of Irish and Germans, who were largely Catholic, continued to grow, and they became, after 1830, a significant voting bloc. By 1850, 27 percent of the people living in Cincinnati had been born in Germany. Seven years earlier, the Germans, realizing their growing political clout, had organized the German Democratic Union of Hamilton County.³⁵ The following year, Cincinnati elected the first German-born representative to the Ohio General Assembly. Later, he was elected to the Ohio Senate and served as a delegate to the Ohio Constitutional Convention in 1850 and 1851. His understanding of the electorate in Cincinnati deterred Pendleton from considering associating with the Whigs, who used nativist tactics, and later the American Party, another name for the nativist Know-Nothings.³⁶

Yet simply because a voter was foreign born did not mean he would vote Democratic. Political debate in Cincinnati in this period did not always revolve around traditional party issues. Rather, nativism drove much of the conflict. Consider, for example, the political behavior of Germans in Cincinnati in the

1853 municipal elections. In early 1853, Archbishop John Purcell asked for state funds to be shared with parochial schools in the Queen City. Local Catholics were concerned that the public school curriculum was Protestant in flavor or excluded religious instruction altogether. Purcell's request unleashed a firestorm. Simple prejudice drove part of the backlash, but an underlying belief that the common school system inculcated in the next generation the values and ideals necessary for citizens of a republic also caused Protestants to eschew any curriculum that might encourage the spread of Catholicism. Sensing that neither of the two major parties, the Whigs or the Democrats, was responding appropriately to this threat to the common school system, native-born Cincinnatians and Protestant Germans formed independent parties.³⁷

Although the Democrats dominated the city by this time, owing in part to the support of its foreign-born population, the issue of foreign ascendance threatened to eat away at its power base. Some native-born Democrats formed a secret society within the Democracy to prevent Germans from obtaining public office. The Miami Tribe, as it eventually became known, apparently made little distinction between Catholic and Protestant Germans. When word of the organization leaked out, German Democrats of all faiths felt alienated from the party. The main Democratic organization tried to maintain its support base among immigrants by opposing the open nativism of many of the Whigs, but because of anti-German sentiment within its own ranks, it lacked a strong resolution on the issue. Even further complicating matters, German Protestants had no love of German Catholics, representing one of various shades of nativism apparent in Cincinnati in the early 1850s.³⁸

The Whig Party in Ohio had a history of being unable to garner much of the immigrant vote. Many Whigs were nativists, and as the party disintegrated, Irish and German immigrants who went to saloons on the sabbath offended many Whigs' politicized sense of piety. Whig anti-Catholicism, xenophobia, and prohibitionism tended to push immigrants, particularly Catholic immigrants, into the Democratic fold.³⁹ Because of Cincinnati's large immigrant population, Pendleton clearly recognized the need to secure their support to be successful politically. His speeches indicate that he deprecated nativism and religious discrimination. This position is consistent with his ideological support of the inviolability of the private conscience. Whether his words were due to ideals of tolerance or simply political opportunism is unclear.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, Pendleton did remain consistent in his opposition to nativism throughout his career.

Pendleton's antinativism demonstrated a cognizance of Cincinnati's growing immigrant electorate. Yet this cannot be the decisive factor for Pendleton because the immigrant community did not vote as a bloc during the early 1850s. Another factor that played a role in George Hunt Pendleton's decision to become

a Democrat was his relationship with Ohio's attorney general and soon-to-be U.S. senator, George Ellis Pugh. Born into a Quaker family, which according to the ethno-cultural historians' interpretation would place him within the Whig Party, Pugh held no prejudice against those of other nationalities or faiths. As a young man, he became a Baptist and considered becoming a minister. He later married Theresa Chalfant, who was a Catholic, and after her death in 1868, converted to Catholicism.⁴¹ Interestingly, Pugh had been a Harrison Whig in 1840, but the *Cincinnati Commercial* noted that he became a Democrat when the Whigs became a "hopeless minority in Hamilton County."⁴² Pugh grappled with this decision concurrently with his friend, Pendleton, and both apparently came to the same conclusion about their own political philosophies and which party would provide the greatest personal advantage.⁴³

One must consider a final and decisive factor in attempting to explain Pendleton's decision to become a Democrat. Although Nathaniel Greene Pendleton was unsuccessful in passing along his political partisanship to his son, he was much more effective in bestowing upon him his political ideology. The younger Pendleton had more than one choice of political philosophy as the 1850s began. He rejected the Know Nothings because of their nativism, preferring instead a society based on "cultural heterogeneity, ethnic diversity, and *laissez-faire*."⁴⁴ He also objected to their willingness to abrogate liberty and equality by allowing government to infringe on matters of private conscience, such as temperance and sabbath laws. Finally, unlike Know-Nothings, he believed in the value of the political party. It was a positive good, a tool to be used to protect the liberties of individuals from forces seeking to limit them.⁴⁵ Pendleton could have joined former Whigs such as Abraham Lincoln and others of the Free Soil philosophy who eventually formed the Republican Party. Like former Whig Alexander Stephens, however, he could not support its association with abolitionism. His racial prejudice was "so visceral and powerful that it . . . required no justification, no supporting reason, at all."⁴⁶ In addition, association with the subsequent Republican Party would have run counter to his family's Southern heritage dating to the colonial period. The Southern political philosophy of states' rights, limited federal authority, and concern for a truly democratic governing system—though reserved for white men—remained a part of Pendleton's ideology throughout his career and would ultimately influence his decision to become a Peace Democrat and oppose the Republican prosecution of the Civil War. His father was dedicated to these principles, though surprisingly Jacksonian in concept, and he passed them on to his son.⁴⁷ They formed the basis of the mid-western Democratic ideology that would dominate the party in this region for the decade to come. That Pendleton's father previously held these views further demonstrates the amalgamated nature of the Whig Party.

Early in his career, George Pendleton's political beliefs evolved to include other Jacksonian tenets such as a strict construction of the Constitution, the elevation of the Common Man by instituting a delegate view of representation in Congress, strict economy in appropriation of public funds, and opposition to concentrated power, particularly government-sanctioned monopolies or privilege.⁴⁸ Pendleton believed that the power of the central government should be limited so as to prevent the trampling of individuals' and states' rights. The southwest portion of Ohio was inhabited by many farmers and laborers—common men who “were deeply unsettled by the emergence of an individualistic social order” associated with the emerging market economy.⁴⁹ Some of the farmers still held onto the agrarian myth, believing that the very essence of the Republic was at stake if the economy evolved too much. Both farmers and laborers alike feared the institutionalization of society, the growth of impersonal corporations, and government-condoned privilege or monopoly. They longed for a “simpler, arcadian past” where personal relationships predominated and the disparity between economic groups was less noticeable.⁵⁰ Unwilling to tolerate (as his father had) such emphases as neomercantilism, Pendleton's developing ideology precluded association with the Whig Party. Much of this evolution took place due to Pendleton's focus on national rather than just local issues. His father had served in Congress, allowing him to recognize the importance of local concerns in light of national initiatives. In examining the inability of President John Tyler to become the leader of the Whig Party in the early 1840s, for example, Pendleton realized that no further impediments stood in the way of Henry Clay's becoming that party's clarion voice. The Whigs, under Clay, had less and less room for those holding to Pendleton's, and his prospective constituents,' ideals. To be successful politically, Pendleton understood that he had to temper his personal ambition with his desire to remain true to his political beliefs and his recognition of the direction of the national party organizations.⁵¹ Even his desire for success fit within the confines of this emerging Jacksonian midwestern Democratic ideology. The common midwesterner was willing to follow a well-to-do and respected man such as Pendleton if he melded his personal ambition with the public interest. Midwesterners were searching for a leader of “honesty, manliness, and wisdom,” and one untainted with the alloy of unmerited privilege.⁵²

The complexity of the antebellum political parties is evident in this seemingly strange mixture of positions that Pendleton brought together. Yet his philosophy was clearly rooted in Jacksonianism. Pendleton's later partisanship seems to support the idea that his father's ideology heavily influenced him, leaving him in the given time period little choice but the Democratic Party. By the Reconstruction era, the party “bore certain similarities to prewar Whiggery.”⁵³ Pendleton repre-

sents that fusion of ideas well: he upheld his father's Southern heritage, including his support for white supremacy, states' rights, and strict construction of the Constitution. Pendleton maintained those Jacksonian principles throughout his career, leading the western Democracy through the Civil War and attempting to direct it beyond. Yet he found justification for some Whig objectives in a Jacksonian ideology reinterpreted, of necessity, because of a changing political milieu. During the war, consistent with Whig tradition, Pendleton frequently fought to limit the expansion of executive power at the expense of legislative prerogative. One cannot interpret his attacks on Lincoln's administration as anti-Jacksonian, however, because Pendleton based them on a concern for the maintenance of personal liberties. In his final initiative in the House before leaving his seat, Pendleton furthered this objective by introducing a bill to authorize cabinet members to have nonvoting seats in Congress—in his mind, another means of keeping tabs on the executive branch. In the end, Pendleton took many of his father's ideals, reinterpreted them within the context of Jacksonianism and in light of new political issues, and developed a political ideology that defined the midwestern Democracy for decades.⁵⁴

The amalgamated nature of the Democracy in the mid-nineteenth century extended beyond Pendleton and his midwestern Democratic supporters, but he did not believe the eastern wing of the party maintained its roots in Jacksonian ideology. Pendleton never strayed far from his Jacksonian principles. It was the foundational political philosophy through which he evaluated all political issues. Pendleton and his midwestern Democratic followers differed from most eastern Democrats, later known as Bourbon Democrats. Both wings of the party supported the long-standing ideals of white supremacy and states' rights, and neither could condone expansion of the central government. Yet on economic issues they parted ways. Bourbon Democrats harkened back to Whig neo-mercantilism. Pendleton parted with his father's Whig heritage here because it contradicted his chosen Jacksonian foundation. Government involvement in support of economic interests smacked of monopoly and privilege and was anathema to any consistent Jacksonian. In his final analysis, Pendleton argued that the Bourbons had left the Jacksonian tradition behind, and he therefore felt compelled to lead the midwestern Democracy in a different direction. He hoped to convince the Bourbons of the error of their ways.

Pendleton never turned his back on the political legacy handed down to him by his father. This legacy became the centerpiece of midwestern Democratic politics during the rest of the nineteenth century. Pendleton developed this political ideology throughout his career, reinterpreting Jacksonianism to address contemporary issues, but never straying from his ideological roots. In the end, wealth, family status, place of birth, and denominational affiliation were necessary causes

but not sufficient in and of themselves. The political environment of his city and his time must be factored into Pendleton's decision. Cincinnati's inhabitants and the demise of the Whig Party certainly played a role. National debates over the expansion of slavery and state squabbles over political dominance had left the party in Ohio in turmoil. Though the Democrats dominated Ohio's politics in the early 1850s, the complex interplay between political factions and ethnic voting blocs within Cincinnati precluded certainty about the future. All of these factors, including Pendleton's relationship with Pugh, had their place: they laid the groundwork for the most decisive influence in Pendleton's choice of political party. Although Pendleton was principally influenced by his father's political ideology, in the changing political milieu of the 1840s and 1850s, many of those beliefs could no longer find a comfortable home within the Whig Party. Edward Mansfield seems to have been partially correct when he argued that fathers influenced the partisanship of their sons. Though partisanship was not always passed down from father to son, political ideology often was.

Emerging from and through this process of choosing partisan affiliation, George Pendleton soon joined his law partner, Pugh, in a meteoric rise to political prominence. The people of Cincinnati took notice of Pendleton as well and, in 1853, nominated him for the office of state senator with little effort on his part. William F. Converse and John Schiff also won nominations to represent Hamilton County as Democrats in the Ohio Senate. In the fall of 1853, the Ohio Democracy reiterated its oft-repeated principles in state elections. They sought to prevent the repeal of the bank tax; to preserve a "just" tax system, which meant that corporations and banks paid a significant share; and to support President Franklin Pierce's policies in lowering the tariff and seeking free trade. Statewide, key races pitted three candidates against each other. These men represented the Whig, Democrat, and Free Soil parties. An editorial in the *Ohio Statesman* on the lieutenant governor's race, for example, accused the Free Soil candidate of being an abolitionist and told Democrats with Free Soil leanings not to be deceived. The Free Soiler eventually dropped out of the race in an effort to push Free Soil voters over to the Whig candidate, leaving the Democratic and Whig candidates to battle for the office. The Whigs, however, faced an uphill climb.⁵⁵

After the presidential election of 1852, the Whig Party in Ohio lost much of its strength. Divided by the platform's acceptance of the Fugitive Slave Law, the national Whig Party had been unable to elect Gen. Winfield Scott. Northern Whigs had been unhappy with the inclusion of the law in the platform, while Southern Whigs feared that Scott would not seriously uphold it if elected. The result was a large Whig voter bloc that was unwilling to vote at all, giving Franklin Pierce and the Democrats the election. In the state elections of 1853,

the Whigs in Ohio were little threat to the Democrats. In spite of their own recent factionalism, the Democrats managed to unite for the sake of victory. They ran no campaign whatsoever, relieving them of having to deal directly with such issues as temperance, which the Free Soilers, now called Free Democrats, had espoused. The Whigs gave up the fight early in the race, handing the Democrats a majority across the state. Democrats won the crucial governor's and lieutenant-governor's races and gained decisive control of the General Assembly, leaving the Free Democrats without the determining influence they had sought. In the state senate race in Hamilton County, Pendleton and the entire Democratic ticket won.⁵⁶

An event prior to Pendleton's entrance into the Ohio Senate made his term especially important to the future of the state. The Constitutional Convention of 1850–51 caused a great deal of dissension within Ohio and even disrupted the Democratic Party. Working as an attorney at the time of the convention, Pendleton had no influence on its decisions, but the revised constitution provided a number of issues that the incoming legislature would have to address. One of the key questions was the regulation of banks and corporations. Whigs tended to be probank and probusiness, seeing little need for more regulation. Free Soilers generally agreed with the Whigs. Democrats split between two viewpoints. The more agrarian areas of the state combined with the laboring class of Cincinnati to generate the "Locofoco" faction that sought to stiffen regulations on businesses and abolish state banks. This radical group, which in Cincinnati was comprised largely of what were called old anti-Miami men, supported hard money and believed that the corporate sector did not pay enough taxes.

Moderate Democrats disagreed, arguing that the system of state-chartered banks was acceptable and only in need of a little more regulation. The moderates combined with the Whigs to defeat the more radical goals of the Locofocos, but the compromises in the revised constitution did allow for more taxes on corporations and banks. The next session of the General Assembly would determine which faction would ultimately be successful. In 1853, Ohioans voted to determine the composition of the second assembly under the revised constitution. Due to the strength of the Locofocos in Cincinnati, Pendleton was mindful of their concerns, but he did not allow them to manipulate his position on financial matters while he served in the state senate. Perhaps motivated by his father's Whig past or by his own interaction with business and bank men as a lawyer, Pendleton stood for moderation on such issues. As he would do throughout much of his career, Pendleton interpreted Jacksonianism through fresh eyes. The issue at hand was the state bank system, not the national bank system that Jackson had opposed. Gradually the strength of the Locofocos began to diminish, due to a conservative business reaction.⁵⁷

One of the major tasks facing the new state assembly was the election of a new U.S. senator. The Democrats had a large majority, but quarreling factions within the party hampered the electoral process. The old Miami Tribe prejudices against the anti-Miami or radical Democratic group resurfaced. The former supported George Manypenny; the latter voted for William Allen. Allen opposed the Kansas-Nebraska Bill presently being debated in Congress. Manypenny refused to take a position, though many of his supporters were considered "pro-Nebraska." George Pugh controlled thirteen vital votes in the legislative caucus, one of which was Pendleton's, and was unwilling to give the victory to either man. Manypenny withdrew in favor of Judge Thomas Bartley of the state supreme court, but the caucus remained deadlocked. Finally Allen withdrew, and Pugh won as a compromise candidate. His views regarding the Nebraska bill were unknown until after his selection, but he ultimately supported the proposal as did George Pendleton. The resolution of the senatorial decision did not end the conflict and divisions, adding to the dissension produced by Locofocoism. These were signals that the Democratic Party was not a strongly unified whole, and the divisions reappeared in the 1854 elections.⁵⁸

Pendleton enjoyed a successful term in the Ohio Senate from January 1854 until late in 1855. He made a significant impact despite his youth and inexperience. The chairman of the senate designated Pendleton, the youngest senator at age twenty-eight, as clerk pro tempore. Though subsequently appointed chairman of the Standing Committee on Federal Relations as well as a member of both the Judiciary Committee and the Committee on Municipal Corporations, Pendleton recognized his status as a junior senator and did not overstep the boundaries imposed by his position. Though he rarely addressed the Senate, he gained a positive reputation through hard work on his committee assignments. Specifically, his work on the Committee of Municipal Corporations exemplified a concern for governmental efficiency and reform that would distinguish much of Pendleton's career. His interest in general improvement, even in the early days of his political career, suggests that he viewed government as an instrument for political and institutional reform.⁵⁹

Pendleton seldom reported to the Senate for the Committee on Federal Relations. One case that arose immediately upon his being seated, however, concerned the disruption of the mails from Ohio through Pennsylvania on the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railroad. Pendleton introduced a resolution from the committee declaring that it was the duty of the U.S. Congress to make sure that the mail got through safely. Pendleton gained more opportunities to address and influence the Senate from the work he did on the Judiciary Committee.⁶⁰

The revised constitution initiated many changes in the state's judiciary system. Pendleton's legal background made him well suited for his responsibilities

on the Judiciary Committee. He created a board of commissioners to commence work on reforming the practices of courts in criminal cases, as well as reclassifying the law for the punishment of crimes. The Judiciary Committee also proposed expanding the role of the justices of the peace to encompass claims not exceeding one hundred dollars. Claims of more than that amount up to three hundred dollars would be assigned to the concurrent jurisdiction of the justice of the peace and the court of common pleas. Pendleton's efforts on behalf of these two measures proved successful and indicated that the Judiciary Committee sought to recreate the judicial system under the guidelines of the revised constitution. Even though three years had passed since its inception, many areas in the legal system still needed to be refined and codified.⁶¹

Much of Pendleton's labor on the Judiciary Committee involved improving laws dealing with such issues as child-centered reforms and efficiency in government expenditures. For example, Pendleton reported to the Senate a list of amendments to a probate act regarding the appointment of guardians for orphaned children. The amendments, which eventually passed, required guardians to report to the court about how they were managing the estates of dependent children and instituted strict guidelines regarding how long the guardianship would last.⁶²

Pendleton's activities on the Committee of Municipal Corporations also promoted reform and change. For example, he reported and supported a bill allowing municipalities to use bonds to purchase land within city limits to be converted to public parks. Such recreation facilities provided urban dwellers with a much-needed respite from the squalor of the city. Pendleton laid the legislative groundwork for this reform, exemplifying a Jacksonian concern for the Common Man. Pendleton also supported legislation to improve the management of orphan asylums. In spite of these progressive positions, Pendleton showed little sympathy for the developing women's rights groups in Ohio. For example, he voted to strike the female gender pronouns in a bill to regulate the admission and practice of attorneys in Ohio. Still, in most issues, he exemplified reformist ideas in the decade before the outbreak of the Civil War.⁶³

In addition to his focus on reform, Pendleton concerned himself with the affairs and views of his constituency. His focus on these issues should be seen as another example of his Jacksonian heritage. As a representative, Pendleton believed that it was his responsibility to act as a delegate, or a direct agent, of the people before the state legislative assembly. For example, he often presented petitions from Cincinnatians to the General Assembly.⁶⁴ Concerned about the various economic interests within the city, his political positions exemplified a moderate approach in light of the growing reaction of Cincinnati businessmen against the Locofocos. These radical Democrats wanted to rid Ohio of state banks, increase

the regulation of corporations, and eliminate paper money. As a Jacksonian, Pendleton supported some of the regulations they desired, but he refused to neglect the needs of his other constituents, the business community, which feared stifling regulation and constriction of paper money. After all, this was a state, not a federal bank system. In addition, he recognized that regardless of his personal view of paper currency, it was the lifeblood of Ohio's commercial economy. As a result, he fostered a policy of moderation. For example, Pendleton served on a select committee to analyze the insurance business in Ohio and to recommend improvements. He supported regulations that ensured payment of claims, but opposed an amendment that required insurance companies to provide the state auditor with a \$50,000 security deposit before entering into business. This proposal, he believed, placed too much restraint on free enterprise and would close the insurance field to all but the largest and wealthiest insurance companies. This bill would have had the effect of granting control of the insurance industry to a small pool of privileged companies, an obviously anti-Jacksonian goal. Pendleton also opposed an amendment to a bill dealing with banking regulation that would have prevented state banks from recirculating notes that they had redeemed with specie. Pendleton recommended that the bill be resubmitted to the Committee on Currency because the wording was vague. He also wanted to prevent the bill from being applied to corporations. If it were, he feared that it would prohibit companies from paying their employees with the paper money they received as income. His proposal lost. While he was mindful of the Locofocos' concerns about currency and corporations, he tried to pursue a compromise position as business opposition to this radical group developed.⁶⁵

Pendleton's attentiveness to his constituency received widespread acknowledgment though he almost did not complete the session. His role in the Senate so impressed local Democratic leaders that they nominated him for the First Congressional District in Hamilton County in 1854, only one year into his Senate term. The seat had been held by his father thirteen years earlier, and most recently by David T. Disney, a Democrat. Four men ran for the Democratic nomination: Pendleton, Disney, Jacob Flinn, and George W. Holmes. The primary race, which focused largely on front-runners Pendleton and Disney, gave Pendleton a majority. Disney claimed that there was corruption in the fourth and thirteenth wards of the district but decided not to contest the election because Pendleton would have won even if the votes in those wards were thrown out. The young lawyer's upset of the three-term incumbent signified Pendleton's rising reputation.⁶⁶

Pendleton's general election opponent, Timothy C. Day, previously a Democrat, had become disgruntled with the party over the Kansas-Nebraska Bill. Western expansion had compelled Congress to address the organization of the

Nebraska Territory. Exacerbating the struggle between Northerners and Southerners was the route of the proposed transcontinental railroad. Illinois senator Stephen A. Douglas wanted, for personal and political reasons, the railroad to be built west from Chicago. In order to garner Southern support for this route, Douglas introduced the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, which annulled the Missouri Compromise and split the Nebraska Territory. Under his plan, the two territories would enter the Union as either slave or free states based on popular sovereignty rather than the prescriptions of the Compromise of 1820. Senator Douglas assumed that the northernmost state would be free and the southernmost would be slave, effectively maintaining the existing balance. By focusing on a democratic choice by the population of the territory, he hoped to find a workable solution to the slavery expansion question that Northerners could support. By opening up a previously free territory to the possibility of slavery and emphasizing states' rights, he hoped to gain Southern support. In return, he wanted to obtain the northern railroad route with Chicago as the eastern terminus.⁶⁷

Day had been a member of the Democratic Party faction that opposed the Douglas plan and therefore condemned the Pierce administration for supporting it. Day, and others like him, left the Democratic Party after Pugh won the U.S. Senate seat instead of the "anti-Nebraska" man, William Allen. The *Cincinnati Commercial* listed Pendleton as a "Nebraska" man, meaning he supported the Douglas plan, while Day, who now openly espoused the ideas of the Know-Nothings, was the anti-Nebraska candidate. The Nebraska issue had precipitated further division within the Democratic Party, and even after the Douglas bill passed, the factions remained. The different political groups emerging took on other distinguishing characteristics, which became the focus of political battles in Ohio in 1854. The underlying agitation over the Nebraska issue, however, remained crucial and forced Democrats such as Pendleton to dodge the question in an effort to entice disgruntled Democrats back to the fold.⁶⁸

Day made an issue of the disputed primary election, saying that Pendleton won due to corruption. Beyond that accusation, Day attempted to resurrect the old factionalism within the city of Cincinnati by charging that his opponent was a member of the Miami Tribe. Day asserted that a combination of the "Miamis" and the "Jesuits" gave him the primary and that the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, which supported Pendleton, was guilty of appealing to voters on this basis. Pendleton responded by denying any affiliation with the Miamis and denouncing the religious prejudices of Day and his supporters.⁶⁹

After abandoning the Democratic Party, Day represented the American Reform ticket in the general election. That party was a fusion of radical Democrats who opposed the Kansas-Nebraska Act, Free Soil Democrats and abolitionists who fought any extension of slavery, old Whigs who resisted the reopening of

the slave question, and Germans who feared that the extension of slavery would limit their economic opportunities in the territories. The Know-Nothings also joined the fusion, however, causing some Germans to jump ship.⁷⁰ The Know-Nothings feared that foreigners, especially Catholics, whose allegiance to the Pope allegedly threatened their loyalty to the United States, were taking over America. The Know-Nothings supported religious and nativist tests to prohibit Catholics and other minorities from running for office or even from voting. The xenophobia of the new American Reform ticket was especially repulsive to the large immigrant population in Cincinnati. Believing that bigoted Whigs used nativism as a smoke screen, Pendleton focused his attacks on this issue. The *Enquirer* told readers that the Democratic Party upheld its Baltimore platform of 1852, based on the spirit of national reconciliation, as well as support for the Pierce administration. As part of its election strategy, the newspaper followed closely Pendleton's tactics and focused its assault on Day's association with the Know-Nothing Buntline organization.⁷¹ The editor was incensed that Day would not respond to repeated questions concerning his nativism.

Another Democratic paper, the *Statesman*, attacked Day's withdrawal of support for Pierce, saying that Day shifted his allegiance when Pierce did not appoint him postmaster. Once again, the party attempted to divert attention from the divisive Nebraska issue. In spite of the concerted effort of Democratic newspapers and party leaders, the fusion party carried Ohio by some eighty thousand votes. The combination of Whigs, Know-Nothings, and disaffected Democrats was too much for the diminished Democratic Party. In the First Congressional District, Pendleton lost to Day by more than three thousand votes. Even in Cincinnati the American Reform ticket won a majority, though it was unable to gain more than a small minority of German voters. Pendleton lost little in the election, because the party as a whole had done so poorly. In addition, fusion could not last for long, and Pendleton was young enough to rebound from defeat.⁷²

Though he entered his second year as a state senator, bruised but not beaten, the following September Pendleton apparently suffered another defeat. The Democratic County Convention nominated George Holmes, William F. Converse, and Stanley Matthews for the state Senate without even mentioning Pendleton's name. The fact that he was not renominated suggests that, rather than a defeat, it was an opportunity, as the party planned to run him for Congress again in the 1856 election. In the October elections of 1855, the Democrats won handily in Hamilton County, electing the entire ticket and giving gubernatorial candidate William Medill a large majority. After losing Hamilton County by 7,500 votes the year before, Medill and the Democrats won it back by more than 8,000 votes.⁷³ The *Enquirer* lauded the dramatic downfall of the Know-Nothings in Cincinnati earlier in the year. They had been overwhelmingly defeated in the April municipi-

pal elections and further stained their reputation with the blood of those injured in riots that followed.⁷⁴ Within the state as a whole, however, the Know-Nothings remained a threat and won the governor's seat for Salmon P. Chase, a Free Soil Democrat. Yet Chase's candidacy further seemed to weaken fusionism. He angered many of the Whig Know-Nothings because of his association with the Democrats and because he was strongly antislavery. Regardless, Chase had been nominated on a ticket filled almost entirely with Know-Nothing candidates. The fact that there were so few Free Soil candidates upset the Free Democrats who supported Chase, but not the rest of the ticket. The Democrats initially encouraged the Free Soilers in their attacks on the Know-Nothings, hoping some of them would rejoin their party. When this proved futile, the Democrats changed tactics, encouraging a group of Cincinnati Know-Nothings who had bolted from the fusion party and nominated Allen Trimble for governor. While the goal was to split the opposition, the Democrats were tainted with Know-Nothingism, a point not lost on the foreign element in Cincinnati. Chase won the election, though he did poorly in southwestern Ohio.⁷⁵

In the fall of 1856, the Democratic Party indeed selected Pendleton as their candidate for Congress from the First District and William Groesbeck from the Second District just as they had two years earlier. The *Enquirer* remembered the 1854 contest in its columns by calling Pendleton the candidate representing "the cause of civil and religious liberty and political equality." The newspaper contended that Pendleton was a Democrat of "excellent attainments . . . unblemished private character . . . principle and conviction . . . [who has] the hearty support of our business and commercial men."⁷⁶ Even before the opposition, which had previously been the fusion party and was now the Republican Party, had named a candidate, Pendleton took the stump. In Georgetown, Ohio, he argued that the Compromise of 1850 and the Kansas-Nebraska Act were analogous, agreeing with the popular sovereignty aspects of both laws, which represented deep-seated Jacksonian principle. While the Ohio Democratic Party had retained up to this time a platform plank in opposition to the expansion of slavery, it recognized that the federal government did not have the power to interfere with the institution where it previously existed. By the 1856 election, however, the party abandoned this position and accepted the principle of popular sovereignty in the territories. Pendleton supported both the Democratic presidential candidate, James Buchanan, and the revised party platform.⁷⁷

Meanwhile, the Republicans selected a congressional candidate. Timothy Day had occupied the seat for two years, but he suffered from severe physical afflictions and declined a second term. Confiding in his friend Frederick Hassaurek, a German Cincinnati, he said that he would rather not run, and "nothing but the direst necessity on which my honor, my friends and the cause

shall be involved, will make me consent."⁷⁸ The *Enquirer* accused Day of being a "Black Republican," or an abolitionist, and said that he was using health as an excuse not to run because he knew he would lose. Nevertheless, Day maintained that he had heart problems. With his withdrawal as a candidate, the Republican Party nominated Alphonso Taft, a prominent Cincinnati lawyer and judge.⁷⁹ Taft's party nominated John C. Frémont for president on a platform committed to fighting the extension of slavery. The specter of nativism remained alive in this election, and the Know-Nothings, upset at Republican emphasis on the slavery extension issue, nominated Millard Fillmore as their candidate on the American Party ticket.

Pendleton organized his campaign somewhat differently from his previous effort. Hamilton County Democrats planned some twenty-five meetings for the campaign in the First and Second Districts alone. They continued to attack the Republicans as they had in 1854, associating them with the Know-Nothings. In this election, however, Pendleton and the Democrats directly addressed the slavery issue. They accused their opponents of exploiting the atrocities in Kansas in an effort to dissolve the Union and give the Northern states control of the federal government. In an effort to confuse the voters, the Republicans charged Pendleton with making Free Soil speeches. Pendleton stood to gain from portraying himself as a Free Soiler, as many German voters supported that position. He could only do so, however, at the risk of offending the majority of his own party and losing the support of the *Enquirer*. The *Enquirer* reported that his speeches confirmed his support of popular sovereignty.

The *Commercial* also accused Pendleton and the Democrats of working in collusion with the Know-Nothings. It reminded voters of Democratic tactics in the 1855 election. In addition to trying to associate the Democrats with the Know-Nothings, Republicans such as Timothy Day tried to convince the Germans that any Know-Nothingism left in the Republican Party was harmless. Day tried repeatedly to assure his German friend Hassaurek that the Know-Nothings were not to be feared. In fact, Day said that Hassaurek's own prejudice against Catholics made him a "half K[now] N[othing]." Day suggested that the faction would eventually "be transferred to the South, and become allied to the present Democratic Party."⁸⁰ Speaking as a Republican, Day exemplified the efforts of his party to gain the German vote. Hassaurek and other Germans did vote Republican because they advocated Free Soil, but they had to overcome their concerns about the party's past connections with Know-Nothingism. Pendleton could gain very little from associating with the Know-Nothings, as that would estrange the predominantly Democratic immigrant population. In 1855, the campaign tactic had attempted to split the Republicans rather than unite the Democrats with the Know-Nothings. Besides, the Know-Nothings

had nominated John Torrence to run against Taft and Pendleton. The Democracy stood to gain from the split within the old fusion party and would not jeopardize itself by fraternizing with the nativists.⁸¹

The Democrats broadened the scope of the election by exposing what they considered to be the deleterious goals of the Black Republicans. Pendleton and his partisan brothers condemned the Republican program for including temperance laws, personal liberty laws to circumvent the Fugitive Slave Law, naturalization laws limiting the power of state courts to bestow citizenship, and national civil liberty laws granting African Americans the right of citizenship. Each of these issues meant the enhancement of the federal government's power to the detriment of states' rights. In addition, each of these issues represented one of the various factions in the Republican Party. The temperance, personal liberty, and civil liberty laws exemplified the "Puritan" aspect of the old Whig platform, while the nativist plank appealed to the Know-Nothings. As the two major parties emerged from the political turmoil of the late 1840s and early 1850s, they solidified around two very distinct sets of principles.⁸²

Pendleton won the election, garnering 6,134 votes to Taft's 4,256. The Know-Nothing candidate obtained only 2,648 votes. While Pendleton and Groesbeck won, the Republicans made gains over their 1855 showing in Cincinnati. Much of that increase resulted from Germans voting for the Republican ticket. The *Enquirer* lamented this outcome, wondering how they could support the nativist-tainted Republicans while the Democrats had worked for so long to oppose the Know-Nothings. In spite of some losses, the Democrats of Hamilton County stood solidly for Buchanan, who won the region by some 3,500 votes. Following receipt of the official notice of victory, Pendleton looked ahead to taking his seat in the U.S. Congress, the seat his father had held sixteen years earlier. At thirty-two, he faced impending turbulent times, the worst in the young country's history. Holding to the Jacksonian principles he espoused in the 1856 campaign, Pendleton formed a lasting political philosophy, one that would eventually form the basis of the midwestern Democratic political ideology and one that made him much more than a parochial Ohio politician.⁸³